Ancient bacterial DNA suggest black death might not be gone for good

An analysis of bacterial DNA extracted from the teeth of two plague victims who died in the early 6th Century in present-day Bavaria, Germany, has shown that they were infected with the bacterium Yersinia pestis, the same plague agent known to have caused the Black Death 800 years later.

However, a detailed comparison of the bacteria's DNA sequences has revealed that the two outbreaks were quite independent of one another. Each pandemic was the result of different Yersinia strains, indicating the independent emergence from the black rat on two separate occasions, the researchers said.

Read the full, original story: Return of the Black Death: Plague that killed millions is able to rise from the dead

Additional Resources:

- 1,500-year-old plague victims shed light on disease origins, Guardian
- With Help of Victims From 1849, Scientists Decode Early Strain of Cholera, New York Times